

Ila language

Ila (*Chiila*) is a language of Zambia. Maho (2009) lists **Lundwe** (*Shukulumbwe*) and **Sala** as distinct languages most closely related to Ila. Ila is one of the languages of the Earth included on the Voyager Golden Record.^[5]

Contents

Orthography

Labio-glottal and palato-glottal fricatives

Tonality and stress

Some words and phrases

Some comparisons

Ideophones or imitation words

Class prefixes

The Ila verb system

Oral literature

Bibliography

References

External links

Orthography

[6]

- **ch** in fact varies from "k" to a "weak" version of English "ch", to a "strong" "ch" to "ty".
- **j** as the voiced sound corresponding to this therefore varies "g"/English "j"/ "dy" / and "y".
- **v** is reportedly like English "v", but **vh** "lips more rounded with a more distinct emission of breath".
- **zh** is the *j* in French *bonjour*.
- **ng** is the sound as in (southern British) English "finger", while **ng'** is as in "singer" - a similar distinction is observed in Swahili.^[7]

Labio-glottal and palato-glottal fricatives

Doke (1928) described several unusual doubly articulated consonants in Ila proper, Kafue Twa and Lundwe.^[8]

Ila	
Lundwe	
Native to	Zambia
Ethnicity	Ila
Native speakers	106,000 (2010 census) ^[1]
Language family	Niger–Congo <ul style="list-style-type: none">Atlantic–Congo<ul style="list-style-type: none">Benue–Congo<ul style="list-style-type: none">Bantoid<ul style="list-style-type: none">Bantu<ul style="list-style-type: none">Botatwe<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ila
Dialects	Ila <div></div> Lundwe <div></div> Sala <div></div> Kafue Twa?
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	Either: <div>ilb – Ila</div> shq – Sala
Glottolog	ilaa1246 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/ilaa1246) Ila ^[2] <div>sala1266 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/sala1266) Sala^[3]</div>
Guthrie code	M.63, 631–633 ^[4]

In Ila proper, /hʘ*, Ɂʘ*, ɦʘ*/ are "modified glottal fricatives in which the air passes through the throat with considerable friction, and is modified by being thrown against the toothless^[9] ridge and inside of the upper lip, causing concomitant frication there. ... The tongue is meanwhile kept in velar vowel position as for [u] and these fricatives therefore inherently possess a *u*-glide, which is noticeable when they are used with any other vowel than *u*." The 'concomitant lip frication' is evidently something like that of [f] and [v]. Doke transcribed these sounds simply ⟨h, Ɂ, ɦ⟩.

Lundwe and Kafwe Twa have a palato-glottal fricative /Ɂ̠ʘ/. "This sound is produced with a tongue position similar to Ila [Ɂ] but with considerable voiced frication in the throat at the same time."

Tonality and stress

Tone is demonstrated by contrasting **aze** with high pitch on the first syllable (= "with him") with **aze** with high pitch on the second syllable (= "he also").^[6]

Some words and phrases

- **ing'anda** - house
- **imboni** - pupil of the eye
- **ipezho** - brush
- **indimi** - tongues
- **lemeka** - honour (verb)
- **bamba** - arrange
- **Bambambila** - they arrange for me
- **Balanumba** - they praise me
- **bobu buzani** - this meat
- **Bobu mbuzani** - this is meat
- **chita** - to do, same is used to mean 'I have no idea'
- **chisha** - to cause to do
- **katala** - to be tired
- **katazha** - to make tired
- **impongo** - a goat ^[6]

Some comparisons

- Ila: **ishishi** - dimness; Sotho: *lefifi* - darkness; Xhosa: "ubufifi" - dimness; Nyanja: chimfifi - secret;

Bemba: IMFIFI - darkness; Kisanga: *mfinshi* - darkness; and Bulu (Ewondo): "dibi" - darkness.

Ideophones or imitation words

Words in English such as "Splash!", "Gurgle", "Ker-putt" express ideas without the use of sentences. Smith and Dale ^[6] point out that this kind of expression is very common in the Ila language:

You may say Ndamuchina anshi ("I throw him down"), but it is much easier and more trenchant to say simply Ti!, and it means the same.^[10]

Some examples:

- **Muntu wawa** - A person falls
- **Wawa mba** - falls headlong
- **Mba!** - He falls headlong
- **Mbo! mbo! mbo! mbò!** - (with lowered intonation on the last syllable) He falls gradually
- **Mbwa!** - flopping down, as in a chair
- **Wa! wa! wa! wa!** - The rain is pattering
- **Pididi! pididi! pididi!** - of a tortoise, falling over and over from a great height
- **Ndamuchina anshi** - I throw him down
- **Ti!** - ditto
- **Te!** - torn, ripped
- **Amana te!** - The matter's finished
- **To-o!** - So peaceful!
- **Wi!** - All is calm
- **Ne-e!** - All is calm
- **Tuh!** - a gun going off
- **Pi!** - Phew, it's hot!
- **Lu!** - Yuck, it's bitter!
- **Bu-u!** - Erh, it's sour!
- **Lwe!** - Yum, sweet!
- **Mbi!** - It's dark
- **Mbi! mbi! mbi! mbi!** - It's utterly dark
- **Sekwè sekwè!** - the flying of a goose
- **nachisekwe** - a goose

Class prefixes

As in many other languages, Ila uses a system of *noun classes*. Either the system as presented by Smith and Dale ^[6] is simpler than that for Nyanja,^[11] ChiChewa,^[12] Tonga,^[13] or Bemba,^[14] or the authors have skated over the complexities by the use of the category "significant letter":

- Class 1. singular: prefix: **mu-**; s/l. (= "significant letter" verb, adjective, etc. prefix appropriate to the class:) **u-**, **w-**
- Class 1. plural: prefix: **ba-**; s/l. **b-**
- Class 2. sing. prefix: **mu-**; s/l. **u-**, **w-**
- Class 2. pl. prefix: **mi-**; s/l. **i-**, **y-**
- Class 3. sing. prefix: **i-**, **di-**; s/l. **l-**, **d-**
- Class 3. pl. prefix: **ma-**; s/l. **a-**
- Class 4. sing. prefix: **bu-** abstract nouns; s/l. **b-**
- Class 4. pl. prefix: **ma-**; s/l. **a-**
- Class 5. sing. prefix: **ku-** often nouns of place; s/l. **k-**
- Class 5. pl. prefix: **ma-**; s/l. **a-**
- Class 6. sing. prefix: **ka-** a diminutive sense; s/l. **k-**
- Class 6. pl. prefix: **tu-** diminutive plural; s/l. **t-**
- Class 7. sing. prefix: **chi-** "thing" class; s/l. **ch-**

- Class 7. pl. prefix: **shi-**; s/l. **sh-**
- Class 8. sing. prefix: **in-**; s/l. **i-, y-**
- Class 8. pl. prefix: **in-**; s/l. **y-, sh-**
- Class 9. sing. prefix: **lu-**; s/l. **l-**
- Class 9. pl. prefix: **in-**; s/l. **y-, sh-**
- Class 10. sing. prefix: **lu-**; s/l. **l-**
- Class 10. pl. prefix: **ma-**; s/l. **a-**

The *locatives* form a special category:

- **mu-** - at rest in, motion into, motion out from;
- **ku-** - position at, to, from
- **a-** - rest upon, to or from off (Compare *pa-* prefix in Sanga, etc.^{[15][16]})

Thus:

- **Mung'anda mulashia** - The inside of the house is dark.
- **Kung'anda kulashia** - Around the house it is dark.
- **Ang'anda alashia** - Darkness is upon the house.

The Ila verb system

The *root* is the part of the verb giving the primary meaning. To this can be added prefixes and suffixes: many elements can be united in this way, sometimes producing long and complex polysyllabic verb words. For example, from the root **anga**, "to tie", we can derive such a form as **Tamuchinakubaangulwilanzhi?** meaning, "Why have you still not untied them?"

Prefixes can show:

- tense
- subject
- object
- voice (exceptional)

Suffixes can show:

- voice
- tense (exceptional)
- mood

Here are some of the forms of the verb **kubona**, "to see". (Note that there are also *negative* forms, e.g. **ta-tu-boni**, "we do not see", that there is also a *subjunctive* mood, a *conditional* mood, a *jussive* mood and the *imperative*. Many *subjunctive* forms end in **-e**.)

The *root* of the verb is in two forms:

- (i) simple stem: **bona** : code - SS
- (ii) modified stem: **bwene** : code ɛ
- -SS **tubona** we (who) see

- -ꞑ **tubwene** we (who) have seen
- -A-SS **twabona** we saw, see, have seen
- -A-CHI-SS **twachibona** we continue seeing
- -A-YA-BU-SS **twayabubona** we are engaged in seeing
- -DI-MU-KU-SS **tudimukubona** we are seeing
- -CHI-SS **tuchibona** we continue to see
- -LA-SS **tulabona** we are constantly (usually, certainly) seeing
- -LA-YA-BU-SS **tulayabubona** we are being engaged in seeing
- -LA-YA-KU-SS **tulayakubona** we are habitually in the act of seeing
- -DI-ꞑ **tudibwene** we have seen
- -CHI-ꞑ **tuchibwene** we have been seeing
- -A-KA-SS **twakabona** we saw
- -A-KA-CHI-SS **twakachibona** we continued seeing
- -A-KA-YA-BU-SS **twakayabubona** we were engaged in seeing
- KA-SS **katubona** (Notice the position of **tu** here) we saw
- KA-ꞑ **katubwene** we did see
- -A-KU-SS **twakubona** we were seeing
- -A-KU-CHI-SS **twakuchibona** we were continuing to see
- -A-KU-YA-BU-SS **twakuyabubona** we were engaged in seeing
- -A-KU-ꞑ **twakubwene** we had seen
- -KA-LA-SS **tukalabona** we shall soon see
- -KA-LA-CHI-SS **tukalachibona** we shall continue seeing
- -KA-LA-YA-BU-SS **tukalayabubona** we shall be engaged in seeing

The above English renderings are approximate.

Certain *suffixes* add new dimensions of meaning to the *root*. Although these follow some logic, we again have to feel a way towards an adequate translation into English or any other language:

- simple verb: **bona** - to see
- relative or dative form: **-ila, -ela, -ina, -ena: bonena** - to see to, for somebody, and so on
- extended relative: **idila, -elela, -inina, enena: bonenena** - to see to, for somebody, etc. **ididila** - to go right away
- causative: **-ya** + many sound changes: **chisha** - to cause to do, from **chita** - to do
- capable, "-able": **-ika, -eka: chitika** - to be do-able
- passive: **-wa: chitwa** - to be done
- middle (a kind of reflexive that acts upon oneself - compare Greek): **-uka: anduka** - to be in a split position, from **andulwa** - to be split by somebody
- stative; in fixed constructions only: **-ama: lulama** - to be straight; **kotama** - to be bowed
- extensive: **-ula: sandula** - turn over; **andula** - split up
- extensive, with the sense of "keep on doing": **-aula: andaula** - chop up firewood
- equivalent of English prefix "re-": **-ulula: ululula** - to trade something over and over again, from **ula** - to trade
- or the equivalent of the English prefix "un-", also: **-ulula: ambulula** - to unsay, to retract
- reflexive - a *prefix* this time - **di- : dianga** - to tie oneself, from **anga** - to tie; **dipa** - to give to each other, from **pa** - to give

- reciprocal: **-ana: bonana** - to see each other
- intensive: **-isha: angisha** - to tie tightly
- reduplicative: **ambukambuka** - keep on turning aside, from **ambuka** - to turn aside

These can be used in composites: e.g. **langidizha** - to cause to look on behalf of.^[6]

Oral literature

A text given by Smith and Dale,^[6] **Sulwe Mbwakatizha Muzovu** ("How Mr. Hare managed to scare Mr. Elephant") presents what might be called a "classical fabliau", with animals talking like people, just as in the Fables of Aesop or the Brer Rabbit stories in the African Diaspora.^[17] Is it fanciful to see the model for the mischievous, resourceful Brer Rabbit in the **Sulwe** of this story? It seems that slaves destined for the southern United States were captured and purchased in this area of Zambia.^{[18][19]} There is at least a statistical possibility that the Brer Rabbit cycle, with its use of ideophones or sound imitations, had an origin in the Ila language.

Bibliography

Smith, Edwin William & Dale, Andrew Murray, *The Ila-speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia*. Macmillan and Company, London, 1920.

References

1. Ila (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/ilb/>) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)
Sala (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/shq/>) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)
2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Ila" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/ilaa1246>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
3. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Sala" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/sala1266>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
4. Jouni Filip Maho, 2009. *New Updated Guthrie List Online* (<https://web.archive.org/web/20180203191542/http://goto.glocalnet.net/mahopapers/nuglonline.pdf>)
5. <http://re-lab.net/welcome/lang.html>
6. Edwin Smith & Andrew Murray Dale, *The Ila-Speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia*, 1919, reprinted by University Books Inc., New York, 1968.
7. e.g. D.V.Perrott, *Teach Yourself Swahili*, English Universities Press, London, 1969.
8. Didier Demolin & Cédric Patin, "Phonetics". In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Bantu Languages*.
9. The Ila had the custom of knocking out the six upper central teeth of adults. The pronunciation of these sounds by children with teeth, however, is very close to that of the adults.
10. Smith & Dale, volume 2, page 293.
11. Thomas Price, *The Elements of Nyanja for English-Speaking Students*, Church of Scotland Mission, Blantyre (Malawi), 1959.
12. *ChiChewa Intensive Language Course*, Language Centre, Lilongwe, 1969
13. C.R.Hopwood, *A Practical Introduction to ChiTonga*, Zambia Educational Publishing House, Lusaka, 1940, 1992.
14. Grammar notes in Rev. E. Hoch, *Hippocrene Concise Dictionary: Bemba: Bemba - English, English - Bemba*, Hippocrene Books, Inc., New York, 1998.

15. *Mukanda wa Leza* (The Bible in KiSanga/Sanga, southern Congo D.R.), Trintarian Bible Society, London SW19, 1991.
16. Lyndon Harries, *A Grammar of Mwera* Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1950.
17. Joel Chandler Harris, *Uncle Remus, or , Mr. Fox, Mr. Rabbit, and Mr. Terrapin*, George Routledge, London, circa 1888.
18. Smith & Dale, volume 1, page 39.
19. Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The History of the Atlantic Slave trade 1440-1870*, Picador, London, 1997. page 706: "From...Ambriz and Benguela...500,000 slaves were probably shipped during the...era 1800-1830;...and...over 600,000 may have been shipped after 1830..."

External links

- Dorothea Lehmann, *Folktales from Zambia: Texts in six African languages and in English* (<http://web.archive.org/web/20150622153527/http://lubutocollections.org/items/show/55>), Lubuto Library Special Collections, accessed May 4, 2014.
 - OLAC resources in and about the Ila language (<http://www.language-archives.org/language/ilb>)
 - OLAC resources in and about the Sala language (<http://www.language-archives.org/language/shq>)
-

Retrieved from "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ila_language&oldid=950163808"

This page was last edited on 10 April 2020, at 15:12 (UTC).

Text is available under the [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License](#); additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the [Terms of Use](#) and [Privacy Policy](#). Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the [Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.](#), a non-profit organization.